

GENDER EQUALITY, MORAL VALUES AND WORLD PEACE

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Abstract

In this academic gathering our topmost endeavor should be and is the ways that can give us mental peace. In many countries like ours we can find that gender inequality has become a main hindrance before achieving peace in a civilized society. The news of rape, fratricide or murders has often made places in the newspapers. It is so often that sometimes we miss the news. TV channels regularly telecast such incidents those are undoubtedly heartrending. We live in a society and our main focus should be how to make our society peaceful and civilized. I think that gender inequality is one of the reasons behind the achievement of peace. As a civilized being peace is also one of the fundamental rights of us. We have the right to achieve it. But we have to find out the ways to achieve it also. Economic stability is also one of the ingredients of peace. But in this paper my point is not economic stability. If freedom, equality and fraternity can be established, peace will be easier to achieve. Moral values can only bring such fruitful result. Cultural and traditional values can only set such predicament in which peace can wither away hatred and war.

Key-Word: *gender equality; inequality; economic stability; moral values; fundamental right; sexuality; psychology; love; respect.*

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WHY PEACE?

It cannot be denied today that we are standing in a time when “peace is despaired, for who can think submission?” and hence, “war, then war, must be resolved.” The two world wars have been experienced by the human beings. Its ghastliness and brutality stirred not a singular country or race, but the whole mankind. As its aftermath famine and useless killing contaminated the growth of our civilization. We cannot keep history apart if we are trying to find out not the meaning of peace, but peace itself.

To find out peace is as abstract an idea that sometimes it can be equaled to the search for God. Peace is a mental state opposite to war or fight. So, achieving peace varies from one person to the other. With the term “other” I want to mean both another person and different (“Other”). I’ll come to that point to focus on my main discussion in another section of my paper. Here, I am in search of peace. Why peace? Is there really any peace in this world or outside? Following William Blake if we try to balance the idea that “without contraries is no progression,” then why peace alone? Why not war with it? If songs of innocence and songs of experience can be sung together, why not war and peace?

Still, we are in search of peace. We are travelling through ages, through different geographical boundaries, through histories in search of peace. A man who works from morn to night earning money, a woman who makes food for her family, young couples who make love do not think about peace regularly. Then, why peace? Peace is mostly for the man who even after earning a huge amount cannot find his mental counterpart at his house; for the girl who remains lying on the sideways after being raped; for the lover who is betrayed by his/ her beloved. Hence, peace is for those marginal who are not only deprived by caste or race but by economy, society and politics of gender or psychology also. That is why peace should be resolved.

GENDER, SOCIETY AND PEACE PROJECT

Sexual identity is biologically created while gender is a social product. The gender issue is so debated and discussed a topic that sometimes it seems that it has become outdated now. Much discussion has taken place; lots of pages have been written down on the question of equality. Still, in modern times it has not stopped its course because it is a discourse. It has only changed its course. The gender issue started in course of time and its flow is now carrying with it the pebbles of new issues to face the new turns of changing society.

By the term “gender” I am not restricted only to the feminine gender; here, I encircle the homosexuals and the “third genders” also. To find out a world as a battleground of men and women often leads us to single direction. As its outcome we get feminism. Though feminism is a discourse and not a movement, the present situation is quite different, as we face it today. Often it behaves as a movement. A movement can change society, but a movement has ebbs also.

When Beauvoir said, *one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*, the scenario was different. When Virginia Woolf wrote about Shakespeare’s imaginary sister, women writers could hardly be found. Hence, history says what changes have been brought to our society from that days of past. Previously, the myths were accepted by the male dominated society. When Holy Bible tells us about the creation of women,

“22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2)

Or, the Japanese myth of Izanagi and Izanami tells us how men took the opportunity of speaking first. Hierarchy began with those times when these myths were written. Today, black ink focuses more on empowered women, instead of suppressed women. We are happy today that women, who are hitherto considered to be weak and frail, have retained their place and socially, politically and economically equal to their male counterpart. But still at a certain point peace is despaired. At some point the powered has remained powered and the oppressed oppressed. It happens when media brings to us the news of rape cases or tortures inflicted on women. Hence,

at that time peace is not only necessary but essential also. I am not talking about only individual mental peace, but peace in the whole community of human beings. We no more want the news of such cases of violence or dehumanizing activities. Gender is not a problem to be cured. Rather we need equality.

We know that gender identity is not given by nature; hence, it is negotiable. In his essay 'Is Femininity inherently peaceful?' in *Gender, Peace and Conflict* Inger Skjelsboek says, "Masculinity and femininity are negotiated interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman. These interpretations determine male and female actions, behavior, perceptions and rationality." (Skjelsboek, 47) We know that biologically there is difference. To differ is better than to defer. 'To differ' is not so harmful as 'to defer'. Biologically men/ women binary opposition is approved and cannot be engulfed. But still keeping it mind we try to equalize all human beings in the platform of humanity irrespective of gender, caste, creed or sexuality.

History always focuses on the fact that women have always been tormented and deprived by men. Men have tried and to some extent have succeeded in suppressing women voice making them the members of a powerless group. But, now, the scenario has changed towards its betterment. Partha Chatterjee has defined "modern women" in terms of their "dress, food, manners, education, her role in organizing life at home, her role outside the home and distinguished *common women* "who was coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males." (Chatterjee, 127) Chandra Talpade Mohanty rejects with Cutrufelli "any historical specificity to the location of women as subordinate, powerful, marginal, central, or otherwise, vis-à-vis particular social and power networks." She says, " 'Women' are now placed in the context of the family systems existed outside the relations of women with other women, and women with men." (Mohanty, 469)

It is really gratifying that the position of the deprived women in many countries like ours has changed, and the change is positive. Women lead in many fields today. Knowing this fact we think that we have changed the world. But is it a total positive change? If so, then why is there lots of news of rape cases throughout the country around the year? Is it not violence? Can we think about peace amidst such terrible inhuman news? The answer is no, it is known to all. Only leading women cannot alone bring changes in our society, nor can reservation for women can do

the same. At that time we need equality—the equality that brings all the gendered people on a platform and the platform should be of humanity.

As I am talking about gender here and I want to go beyond the margin of gender standing in a new era with a hope of an equal and even world, I'll discuss the sexual differences and different orientation also. Here I want to include the queer and the third gender also because power is not only inflicted on women only. The recent news of Orlando is an instance of it. Reports say that in a gay nightclub in Florida, Orlando, early in the Sunday morning a gunman killed 49 people and wounded 53 more. *The New York Times* commented that it was the “worst mass shooting in American history” (By Liam Stack, June 12, 2016) Later reports revealed that the gunman was named Omar Marteen, aged 29 and he claimed to have allegiance to the Islamic State. President Obama called it a “homegrown extremism” though there was no clear evidence of his being a part of a larger terrorist plot.

Such incidents are not rare as history tells us. Only a bird's eye view to the Google Wikipedia shows us how from a long time homosexuality was being suppressed by the heterosexual human myth. Yes, I call the heterosexual society a myth because it is how we look at the society and arrange acceptance and rejection of sexual orientations in our everyday life. It is on this heterosexual myth that our society stands. In every society heterosexuality is approved while the homosexuals have to face threats. Sedgwick writes in 'The Beast in the Closet' gathering information from Alan Bray, “Before the end of the eighteenth century, however, Bray shows, with the beginnings of a crystallized male homosexual role and male homosexual culture, a much sharper-eyed and acutely psychologized secular homophobia was current.” (Sedgwick, 468) It was not the scenario of England only. In many countries that was the situation.

“On the subject of sex, silence became the rule,” writes Foucault in 'We Other Victorians.' (Foucault, 292) Foucault has pointed out some instances how sex has been tried to be repressed, how it has become a clandestine matter. Only in “[T]he brothel and the mental hospital...would untrammelled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms to reality, and only to clandestine, circumscribed, and coded types of discourse.” (Foucault, 293) This clandestine nature of sex, this “censorship” is another reason why sexual identity and its varieties are also being repressed. As in our society only heterosexual relationships are conventionally approved, all the other relations are being kept in the margin. Marginal homosexual relationships often

raise heads to get a voice which is always being tried to suppress by the heterosexual centre. Foucault did not approve homosexuality on the basis of power, activity and passivity. When Foucault was asked if homosexual love was better, he commented, "But I say that proves that loving boys was a problem. Because, if there were no problems, they would speak of this kind of love in the same terms as love between men and women." (Foucault, 344) He again added that a "free citizen could not be dominated and used as an object for someone's pleasure." (Foucault, 345) Rather, he requested not to treat a boy as a woman. Mentioning Plutarch he there could not be any reciprocity in a physical relationship between a man and a boy.

At this point power is from inside and outside both. Following Plutarch and Foucault, the projection of power works within the homosexual love relationship when a man makes a boy his slave, snatching away his freedom. A man who is playing the role of the traditional husband projects power on the boy who is playing the role of the traditional wife. Foucault looks at the issue in the social framework. To him, "A woman, a slave, could be passive: such was their nature, their status." (Foucault, 345) But in the framework of their social selves a boy, according to him, should never be treated as a woman, as a slave. But, can we not say that there is something in love relationships? Is it only a matter of submission of one partner to the other? Power works here; but, the power is not in what one "top" (a man who plays the role of a husband) projects upon one "bottom" (a boy who plays the role of a wife). I have used the terms here as these are used by the homosexual people who answered me during a brief interview. The power is that of dependence. It is more psychological than social.

Society plays the role when the power projection is from outside the homosexual love relationships. The disapproval of society is not male chauvinism; rather, it is heterosexual hierarchized position. I do not prefer to call the homosexuals or bisexuals a community. We cannot introduce ourselves by asking about one's sexual preference. It is the human being we become familiarize with. He/she is a part of humanity firstly. Then comes the question of his/her sexual orientation. If Foucault's social framework is at work and freedom is sought, freedom should be given to every individual to choose his/her sexual orientation. If peace is to be restored, freedom of choosing a partner should be given to all irrespective of gender.

To bring the gendered human beings on the same stage another issue invites our notice. Recent developments of our country allow a broader scope for the "third gender" people or the

hermaphrodites. They are being tried to give a social approval by some positive political approaches. It is undoubtedly a positive approach towards maintaining peace. But, still we cannot go beyond the gender identity. It is not the male dominated society that smothers the voice of the marginal third gender people, but the gendered society that is responsible for it. How peace can be gained when in a society of human beings some are in the centre and some are marginal? Marginalization or centralization is not a matter of debate because in no society everyone can be centralized or marginalized where there is a periphery of a circled society. But apart from this mathematical diagram, a society or a culture should treat every individual not from the view point of gender. It should be humanity. Humanism should get more importance. Otherwise, the volatile position of subject and object will bother our peace. The subject brags his presence and importance. He knows that without his existence the object has no existence. But both cannot meet one another. One is always fleeing after the other. But the subject is objectified. The objectification of the subject places the latter in a dangling position. His boastings go in vain. The object's existence helps the subject to exist. Lacan says, "For, in psychology, objectification is subjected in its very principle to a law of *me`connaissancethat* governs the subject not only as observed, but also as observer." (Lacan, 144)

Now, to find out the remedy to come out of this gendered society that divides subject from object, centralized from marginalized, oppressor from the oppressed, we must think about the inclusion of moral education in our education system. Indian culture has always given the importance of moral education. Our traditional history says it. But that cannot be totally applied to our present day condition. Keeping our present day situation in view, we have to teach our pupils to value others not on the basis of gender or sexual orientation, but on the ground of humanity because everyone has a right to live. If gendered equality brings peace by ending the fight within and outside a community—a community of human beings—then, why should we not value equality? Only, moral education can teach to value others as a human being. It can bring respect for humanity. If it can be start from the root level of schooling system, the newly taught generation can bring a peaceful society.

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